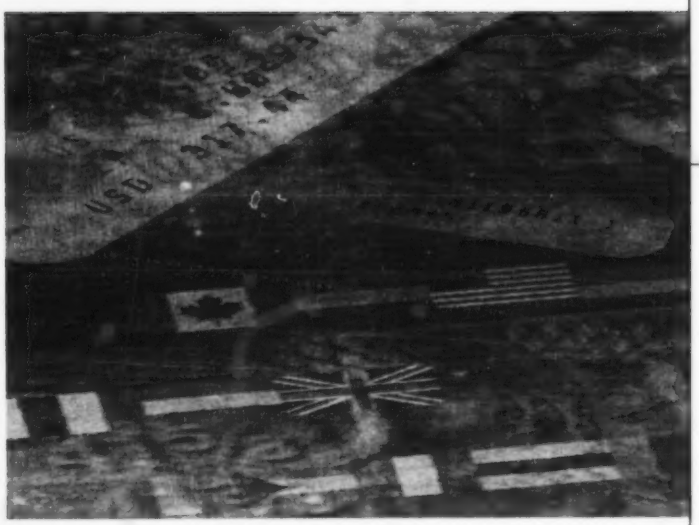

Closer to Home

Provincial Immigration Policy in Western Canada

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BUILDING THE NEW WEST
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BUILDING THE NEW WEST

This report is part of the Canada West Foundation's **Building the New West (BNW) Project,** a multi-year research and public consultation initiative focused on the strategic positioning of western Canada within the global economy.

Five key priorities emerged from an extensive research and consultation process and provide a framework for the Building the New West Project:

- the West must create the tools to attract, retain, and build HUMAN CAPITAL;
- the West must continue ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION;
- the West must strengthen its TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE;
- the West must promote the global competitiveness of its MAJOR CITIES; and
- the West must develop new ways of facilitating REGIONAL COORDINATION.

To learn more about the BNW Project, please visit the Canada West Foundation website (**www.cwf.ca**).

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Different regional needs require immigration policies that are in tune with provinces. This is particularly the case with the need for skilled labour. Ensuring a skilled labour force is a significant concern for most western Canadians. Although there has been a disconnect between the potential labour gap and immigration as a solution, these two issues can be brought together by tailoring immigration policies to fill these province-specific labour gaps.

Currently, intergovernmental agreements between federal and provincial governments are working towards specific immigration policies. Provincial nominee programs (PNPs) allow provinces to have a say in choosing immigrants, focusing on bringing in those immigrants who are a match for provincial skills shortages. *Closer to Home: Provincial Immigration Policy in Western Canada* discusses the provincial objectives surrounding immigration, and the structure of the PNPs resulting from these objectives. The benefits of PNPs include:

- **Addressing Province-Specific Labour Shortages.** Industries experiencing skills shortages can use the PNP to bring in highly-skilled immigrants in a relatively efficient manner.

- **Promoting Regional Dispersion.** The emphasis of PNPs on the labour market represents a strong force attracting immigrants to areas outside of Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

- **Renewing Rural Areas.** Rural areas need skilled labour to create successful businesses. With the appropriate incentives provided by the PNPs, skilled immigrants will be more likely to locate to rural areas in need.

- **Simplifying the Process.** Immigration applications for provincial nominees are often processed federally from three to nine months, compared to eighteen to twenty-four months for immigrants who apply as skilled workers.

As these programs grow, maintaining the incentives to ensure that immigrants come, and stay, is a crucial factor in shaping provincial policy. What is important is to raise the profile of the PNPs through marketing methods to employers and prospective nominees. This could be accomplished through partnerships with community organizations, adding valuable resources to constrained federal and provincial governments. Community organizations can also play a role in retention of immigrants, providing support in welcoming and settlement. Provincial selection must focus on whether the immigrants are likely to settle in the province long-term. Adaptability is pivotal in ensuring retention. Provinces evaluating prospective nominees must also ensure that the prospective nominee has a connection to the province, whether it is through family, or through employment.

Through a discussion of the different western PNPs, it is clear that the PNPs represent a valuable tool in giving the provinces the means to create a policy specific to their own needs. Furthermore, these policies are of benefit to both immigrants and the province. A policy attuned to the needs of both is beneficial.

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Introduction

Geographic bias has largely dictated immigration patterns in Canada. With the majority of immigrants concentrated in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, a geographic imbalance has resulted in relatively low immigration levels to relatively smaller cities and rural areas. Unfortunately, these are the areas with the greatest need: along with facing difficulty in attracting immigrants, these areas are also trying to prevent out-migration to avoid losing skilled workers. In light of these issues, greater regional dispersion is desirable – relieving pressure on larger urban centres by shifting immigration towards smaller centres is beneficial in bringing numbers to the regions in most need. The question is: how can this regional dispersion be achieved? How do areas other than Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver attract immigrants?

A possible solution to achieve greater regional dispersion could be provincial involvement in the immigration process. Provincial nominee programs (PNP) represent one of many tools that can potentially achieve this goal. These programs are intergovernmental agreements tailored to specifically address greater regional dispersion and critical labour shortages. Becoming involved in the immigration process is beneficial for regions that are not usually magnets for immigrants. A 2003 report from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration states, "the Provincial Nominee Program is the most obvious vehicle to identify skill gaps, and to bring municipalities and smaller centres outside of Toronto to the table" (9).

A previous Canada West Foundation publication, *Increasing Western Canadian Immigration*, discusses the benefits that can result from sharing the benefits of immigration throughout the region. *Closer to Home* seeks to raise the profile of regional immigration policy in western Canada by answering the following questions:

- What is a Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)?
- Why do the provinces need a PNP? What is the value of a regional immigration policy?
- How are the western Canadian PNPs structured? What are their objectives?
- What are the central elements of the PNPs?

By answering these questions, we hope to promote a better understanding of the role that western provinces have in immigration, and set the stage for informed discussion for a possible expansion of this role.

I. Background of the Provincial Nominee Programs

What is a provincial nominee program?

The provincial nominee programs are intergovernmental agreements between the province and the federal government, allowing the provinces greater input into selecting and recruiting immigrants. The provincial nominee class recruits immigrants who will create economic benefits specific to the province, and meets particular labour market needs that cannot be filled by the local labour market. The PNPs are employer-driven, although Manitoba has some built-in flexibility to accept those without guaranteed employment. If an employer is in need of workers and cannot fill this need with additional training or through the local labour market, the job can be filled by recruiting internationally.

These agreements were signed in 1998 with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and British Columbia. Alberta followed afterwards, signing an agreement in 2002. Except for Manitoba, these are pilot programs. The quotas and agreement expiry dates set out for provincial nominees (PNs) are presented in Figure 1.

In the first stage of the provincial nominee process, the province reviews the prospective nominee's application (in some provinces, several phases are involved in this first stage). Once the application has been approved, the appropriate information is sent to Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) for review, where medical clearance and security checks are conducted. After this step is completed, the provincial nominee is issued permanent residency by the CIC. The completion of this entire process ranges from three to nine months, as opposed to the federal process, which ranges from eighteen to twenty-four months.

The Current State of Western PNPs

Looking at the most recent numbers, the PNPs are demonstrating considerable growth (see Figure 2).

It is important to look at the context of these numbers – where do the PNPs fit within the overall landscape of economic immigration to Canada? Since 1998, the provincial nominee immigrant class has been included in the economic principal applicant category. In the overall picture, with the exception of Manitoba and Saskatchewan,

Figure 1: Federal/Provincial Agreements and Amendments

PROVINCE	Date Signed	Expiry Date	# of Provincial Nominees Allocated
British Columbia	May 19, 1998; Extended May 19, 2003	May 19, 2004	1,000 over 5 years
	April 5, 2004	April 5, 2009	BC and CIC will agree on annual provincial nominee targets. For Fiscal 2004/2005 year, targets are: Strategic Occupations – 300 Business Category – 45
Alberta	March 2, 2002 Extended October 2003	March 2, 2005	800 over 3 years
Saskatchewan	March 16, 1998 Extended March 2001 Extended October 2001	September 16, 2000 September 16, 2001 September 16, 2002	150 over 2 years 300 over 3 years 300 over 4 years
	Canada-Saskatchewan Agreement on PN signed November 14, 2002*	November 14, 2007	200 a year for 5 years
Manitoba	October 22, 1996; Renewed June 6, 2003	Ongoing	3,400 over 5 years Target for 2003 was 1,500. Manitoba and Canada will agree on annual provincial nominee targets.

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Annual Report to Parliament.
*As part of recent changes to their program, Saskatchewan may amend this agreement later this year, changing the quota of provincial nominees to 300 nominations for 2004-2005.

Figure 2: Total Number of Provincial Nominees in Western Canada, 1999-2003

YEAR	BC	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba
1999	11	-	18	422
2000	12	19	37	1,097
2001	22	19	41	972
2002	207	24	73	1,527
2003	441	178	174	3,106

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001, 2002.

the most recent numbers show that PNPs are a small subset of immigration to the provinces (see Figure 3).

BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan PN immigration is relatively low compared to immigration as a whole. However, it is important to note that these programs are in a state of infancy, and may grow over time with increased resources. For example, Manitoba's focused immigration mandate from the early 1980s has led to an extensive program with considerable time and resources factoring into the program's growth.

Over time, tracking this growth and identifying the impetus behind it will be an important factor in shaping the policies behind these programs.

Figure 3: Percentage of Economic Applicants and Provincial Nominees, 2004 (by Province of Landing, 2003)

PROVINCE	Total Provincial Nominees	Total Economic Immigrants	Total Immigrants – All Classes	Provincial Nominees as a % of Economic Immigrants	Provincial Nominees as a % of All Immigrants	Economic Immigrants as a % of All Immigrants
British Columbia	441	20,525	35,238	2.1%	1.3%	58.2%
Alberta	178	7,850	15,834	2.3%	1.1%	49.6%
Saskatchewan	174	677	1,673	25.7%	10.4%	40.5%
Manitoba	3,106	4,074	6,490	76.2%	47.9%	62.8%
Rest of Canada	520	89,664	162,227	0.6%	0.3%	55.3%

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004a.

Where are the PNs coming from?

Over the years, the source country composition of overall immigrants has shifted away from European countries, and towards Asia. Figure 4 shows the top five source countries for all immigrants in Canada, while Figures 5-8 show the top five source countries for provincial nominees landing in each of the western provinces.

Figure 4: The Top Five Source Countries of All Immigration Classes to Canada, 2002 (229,091 immigrants)

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	% of All Immigrants
China	14.5%
India	12.6%
Pakistan	6.2%
Philippines	4.8%
Iran	3.4%

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002

Figure 5: BC Prov. Nominees by Source Country March 2001-May 2003 (296 nominees, principal applicants only)

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	% of Provincial Nominees
United Kingdom	20%
Australia	10%
Republic of Korea	7%
Philippines	6%
United States	6%

Source: Rivers and Associates, 2003

Figure 6: Alberta Prov. Nominees by Source Country, 2002-Current (245 nominees, principal applicants only)

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	% of Provincial Nominees
South Africa	18%
United Kingdom	16%
United States	11%
Germany	6%
Japan	4%

Source: Alberta Economic Immigration, 2004

Figure 7: SK Prov. Nominees by Source Country, 1998-2004 (289 nominees, principal applicants only)

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	% of Provincial Nominees
United Kingdom	26.0%
South Africa	15.9%
South Asia	9.3%
Ukraine	8.0%
Germany	6.9%

Source: Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, 2004a

By isolating the source country trends for PNs, some interesting patterns arise, namely a pronounced contrast between Canada's numbers for all immigrant classes and the composition of the provinces' PNs.

In Canada, the majority of immigrants (all classes) arrived from Asia and the Middle East, as seen by Figure 4. Similarly, BC has seen a majority of immigrants from Asia. Between 1990 and 2001, 76% of immigrants settling in BC were from Asia. Immigration from Asia has also been predominant in Alberta (55%) and Saskatchewan (42%) (Statistics Canada 2001b).

In contrast, the majority of PNs landing in BC were from the UK and Australia. In Alberta, the top five source countries demonstrate a trend towards mainly English--speaking countries.

Saskatchewan's numbers are similar to BC, with a majority of their PNs arriving from the UK. The next largest group of PNs to Saskatchewan originated from South Africa, which could be explained by the addition of health professionals to Saskatchewan's PN job categories last year. A significant increase in physicians from South Africa resulted from this addition.

For Saskatchewan, Alberta, and BC, these PN immigration trends may be explained in part by the fact that these provinces' programs are employer-driven. The employer-driven component ensures that the nominee's skills are used to their full potential. However, there are barriers faced by immigrants from non-English speaking countries. Foreign credentials are widely known to be a significant employment barrier for immigrants. In a study conducted in 2000 by PricewaterhouseCoopers, 40% of employers admitted to screening out applications of individuals who attended foreign institutions (Immen 2004).

Figure 8: Manitoba Prov. Nominees by Source Country, 2003 (3,085 principal applicants and dependents)

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	% of Provincial Nominees
Germany	26.5%
Philippines	25.7%
Korea	8.4%
India	4.3%
Macedonia	4.0%

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, preliminary 2003

Physicians from South Africa, the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand are more likely to have their education and experience recognized compared to other countries. Employers may be most comfortable in hiring out of these countries because they do not have to be concerned about the foreign credential barrier. However, steps are being made to create programs that will effectively appraise foreign credentials (Immen 2004). Increasing information about this issue will remove the ambiguity behind credentials, and help employers recognize legitimate foreign education and training. Lowering the barrier for immigrants, who might otherwise be screened out by their foreign education, is an important factor for employer-driven PNPs.

On a cautionary note, it is important to state that these numbers represent a relatively small portion of overall immigration to these provinces over a short period time, and are not yet reflective of a long-term trend. As the PNPs grow, greater awareness of the program will be raised with communities, employers, and prospective nominees in a variety of countries. Awareness, accompanied by additional resources dedicated to the programs and improvements in the foreign credential issue, may result in increased numbers, potentially drawing from a host of countries.

Program structure may also explain some of the variation in the source countries of Manitoba PNs. More than two-thirds of the Manitoba PNs originated from Germany and the Philippines. This high concentration of immigrants from Germany is not surprising given the province's community agreements with Winkler and Steinbach, the two largest receiving communities outside of Winnipeg (see Figure 9). Winkler and Steinbach have a significant German population of 65.2% and 56.1%, respectively.

Both communities hold strongly to German-Mennonite traditions. Going to a community similar in culture and language is particularly attractive to prospective nominees, explaining the communities' ability to draw PNs from Germany. Similarly, Winnipeg has a large Filipino community, representing 36.5% of the visibility minority population (Roach 2003). This critical mass is an instrumental factor in drawing nominees from the Philippines.

Figure 9: Destination of Manitoba's Provincial Nominees, 2003 (Principal Applicants and Dependents)

DESTINATION	Provincial Nominees
Winnipeg	68.8%
Steinbach	11.7%
Winkler	11.1%
Other destinations	8.5%

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004c

II. The Value of Provincial-Federal Cooperation

A national immigration policy is one of the contributing factors to immigrants clustering the large cities. Without the proper incentives offered by the regions in need, immigrants may not realize the choices that they may have outside of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Together, the federal and provincial governments can realize significant benefits by working together.

Addressing Province-Specific Labour Shortages

Attracting skilled immigrants provides economic benefits, as immigrants represent a rich source of human capital. Although immigration policy has mainly been the responsibility of the federal government, provincial involvement can promote the different objectives, and needs, of each region. Provinces are in the best position to determine what types of skilled workers they need, since labour shortages particular to a certain province may arise due to regional differences. For industries experiencing immediate skills shortages, the PNP can be a valuable policy, bringing in highly-skilled immigrants in a relatively efficient manner.

In the western provinces, federal-provincial cooperation emerged as a means of filling labour shortages. A pilot agreement between Manitoba and the Canadian government in 1996 recruited sewing machine operators because of a shortage of qualified workers in the apparel industry. Through this program, Manitoba hoped to recruit immigrants as a short-term measure that would contribute to a long-term solution (Government of Manitoba 1996). The success of this program later evolved into a broader, non-occupation specific Provincial Nominee Agreement signed in 1998.

Currently, the PNPs have been working with industry to address labour gaps. The Saskatchewan PNP has been running a pilot program with the Saskatchewan Trucking Association to attract 120 long-haul truckers to fill the provincial need for the trucking sector. Also, the health professional shortage in

• Quebec: The Foray into Regional Immigration Policy •

Quebec was the first province to actively engage in regional immigration policy. The reason for this involvement was to maintain its distinct culture, and also to address concerns about maintaining the population. Agreements between the federal government and Quebec date back to the 1970s. In 1968, Quebec created its own provincial immigration department. The Lang-Cloutier agreement, signed in 1971, allowed Quebec "orientation officers" at overseas immigration posts, with the intent of promoting Quebec as a destination for prospective immigrants. The Andras-Bienvenue agreement signed in 1975 furthered Quebec's involvement by allowing Quebec officials to engage in the recruitment and selection process overseas. A formal regional immigration policy emerged in 1978, with Quebec signing an agreement with the federal government to guarantee greater federal-provincial cooperation on immigration policy. The objectives of recruiting and settling immigrants were reflected in a change in Quebec's immigration department in 1981, which became the Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration (DeVoretz, et. al. 2003).

Under the latest agreement signed between Canada and Quebec in 1991, the Canada-Quebec Accord (McDougall-Gagnon-Tremblay Agreement), Quebec chooses its own economic principal immigrants, and is entitled to receive a proportion of immigrants similar to its share of the Canadian population. While the federal government sets its annual immigration targets, Quebec notifies the federal government of how many immigrants they will take. These independent immigrants are selected according to a points system similar to the federal criteria; however, the passing score for Quebec ranges from 50-58 out of 76 points, while the federal criteria are more stringent, requiring a minimum passing score of 67 out of a possible 100 points.

Quebec also has a say in refugee applicants. While the federal government processes refugee claims, Quebec can choose refugees who will most likely integrate into the culture; the province may also exercise the right to veto any refugee claimant.

BC has been addressed with the government's partnership with Health Match BC, a recruitment agency for health professionals.

Promoting Regional Dispersion

Along with promoting regional economic development, the PNP can also support greater regional dispersion (Cormode 2003). A policy in western provinces to attract immigrants to small and medium-sized cities can work towards a more even distribution. A more compelling motivation is the high percentage of recent immigrants in the low-income category in larger cities; that is, the immigrant poverty issue could be tightly linked to large cities. Statistics Canada data (Heisz et. al. 2004) capturing the composition of the low-income population among recent immigrants tell an interesting story (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Low Income Rates Among Recent Immigrants, 1980-2000

	Recent Immigrants		
CITY	1980	1990	2000
Toronto	23.4%	28.2%	32.8%
Montreal	29.3%	41.0%	41.2%
Vancouver	17.8%	26.7%	37.4%
Calgary	18.2%	33.8%	28.9%
Edmonton	16.9%	35.6%	29.3%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2004

For Toronto and Vancouver, recent immigrants had high low-income rates, increasing over time. However, recent immigrants in Calgary and Edmonton had relatively smaller low-income rates, which decreased from 1990 to 2002. Statistics Canada data from the 2001 Census show a gap in unemployment rates in larger urban centres in favour of non-immigrants. However, immigrants fared better in smaller cities, often with lower unemployment rates than non-immigrants (Statistics Canada 2001a).

These data suggest that, on average, immigrants choosing smaller cities perform relatively well in the labour market compared to the three largest cities. Additional evidence from Laryea (2002) indicates that immigrant earnings converged with those of native-born Canadians at a faster rate in small to medium-sized cities relative to large cities. While it would be rash to assume that even more immigrants will perform equally well, a higher likelihood of success in the labour market are reasons to pursue a regional immigration policy advocating immigrant settlement outside of the larger urban centres. According to Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (Chui 2003), immigrants who chose to locate outside of the top three cities cited "family or friends" or "job prospects" as the top reasons for their choice (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Economic class immigrants top reasons for location choice

REASONS	Toronto	Vancouver	Montreal	All other Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and non-CMAs
Family or friends	49.7%	41.3%	31.3%	35.6%
Job prospects	23.4%	6.1%	15.8%	32.3%
Lifestyle	4.9%	11.7%	8.3%	5.6%
Housing	4.9%	–	–	–
Education prospects	–	7.0%	10.1%	12.1%
Ethnic Group concentration	4.6%	–	–	–
Climate		20.0%	–	–
Language	-	-	18.5%	
Business Prospects	–	–	–	5.5%

Source: Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, 2001

Comparing the immigrants' choice of "job prospects", there is a marked difference between the three largest cities and other CMAs, which cited this reason as a predominant choice. In the three largest cities, "family or friends" was the dominant factor. While family and friends represent a significant pull for immigrants in the three cities, the emphasis of PNPs on the labour market represents a strong force attracting immigrants to much needed areas.

Renewing Rural Areas

Immigration can also come into play in revitalizing rural areas. Attracting skilled labour to create successful businesses is a contributing factor to the success of rural areas (Azmier et. al. 2004). Statistics Canada data from the 1996 Census show that among recent immigrants (arriving from 1991-1996) who settled in rural areas (defined as a density of 150 persons per km^2), the proportion of those with a university degree exceeded those of the Canadian-born (Statistics Canada 2004). In the rural regions, more than 20% of new immigrants held a university degree, while approximately 10% of the Canadian-born possessed a university degree. Rural areas benefit from drawing this high level of education, as these immigrants are a valuable source of highly-skilled labour. In looking at the urban/rural split of PNs, approximately 45% of Alberta PNs have settled in areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton, while 40% of Saskatchewan PNs settled in rural areas. These numbers demonstrate that immigrants are indeed interested in locating outside of urban centres if the appropriate incentives are offered.

Simplifying the Process

The immigration process for provincial nominees is expedited. Immigration applications for provincial nominees are often processed federally from three to nine months compared to eighteen to twenty-four months for immigrants who apply as skilled workers. The reason for this faster process is due in part to the application review responsibility shifting from the federal government to the provinces, resulting in less of an administrative burden on the CIC.

III. Program Structure

Each program is structured according to each province's needs. As the programs take shape, changes have been made accordingly to increase the efficiency of the process. Presenting the differences among these programs can give a better idea of how regional immigration policy is developing.

Labour Market Needs

Each province has adopted a different PNP policy, appropriate to their individual needs and the amount of resources available. These programs are based on strengthening provincial labour markets. Looking at the requirements in bringing in prospective nominees is important in describing the structure of the programs (see Figure 12).

The majority of the PNPs are primarily employer-initiated. Alberta will only accept a nominee with a confirmed job offer. Skilled workers can qualify for the Saskatchewan PNP without a guaranteed job offer. However, the majority of present Saskatchewan nominees qualified with job offers and the province has announced job offers will be required when it broadens the Skilled Worker Category later this year. In reality, a fair number of skilled workers are brought in as Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW), and then are nominated by the employer for the PNP. The temporary work permit has proved to be an important transition tool for prospective nominees and employers; this will be discussed further in the report.

In terms of skills shortages lists, provinces use criteria to evaluate skills demand and need in the province. In Alberta, a labour market assessment of the prospective nominee's job offer assists in the consideration of the application. Saskatchewan was the only province with a

Figure 12: A Summary of the Provincial Nominee Programs for Western Canada

	BC	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba
Need Guaranteed Job Offer	YES	YES	YES	YES/NO (see Figure 14)
Job Must be On High Demand Skills List	Rather than skills shortages list, has a list of industry sectors that are considered high priorities. Also lists occupation types that are not eligible	NO	NO, eliminated in May 2004	NO
Occupation Categories	Strategic Occupations: - Skilled Workers - International Students - Registered Nurses Business Categories: - Business skills - Projects - Regional Business	Skilled Workers Health Professionals International Students Farm Owners/ Operators	Skilled Workers Health Professionals Business Owners Farm Owners/ Operators	Employer Direct International Students

specific list; however, Saskatchewan has decided not use this list as of May 2004. Both immigrant branch officials and consultations with various sources have noted that the list is unnecessary since it does not address the province's need for skilled labour (Lorje 2003). Due to the dynamic nature of the labour market, any list may not accurately reflect the true character of the shortages. In a broader sense, BC promotes high priority industries rather than specific skills shortages. Both BC and Manitoba have restricted occupations lists.

Manitoba's flexibility in not requiring job placements can be attributed to more experience in federal-provincial agreements relative to the other western PNPs, and an aggressive goal of attracting 10,000 immigrants by 2006. This flexibility leads to a greater pool of applicants because of reduced restrictions in applying (Lorje 2003).

PNP Categories

In specifying the occupation categories, Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC list skilled workers and health professionals. Both Saskatchewan and BC list business immigrants and international students. Each province has a list tailored to its needs - for example, Saskatchewan, which has found its numbers of farmers decreasing over the years, includes a category for farm owners/operators. BC's stands to gain significantly from drawing from a large pool of international students - 33.9% of all international students immigrating to Canada in 2002 chose BC as their destination, second only to Ontario's numbers of 34.2% (CIC 2004d). Although Alberta's program has job categories, formal criteria for the categories are not presented, since employers present cases directly to the province for review. Applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Only BC and Saskatchewan offer a detailed breakdown these occupation categories (see Figure 13).

In early May, Saskatchewan announced that it will be expanding its Skilled Worker Category. Program details have not been finalized, but the category will be opened to qualified skilled workers who have a permanent job offer in Saskatchewan, and who qualify on a points test. In addition, the Business Category will be redefined. The current program limits business activity to key economic development sectors, excluding service or retail business. The changes, which will be made later this year, are intended to grant more flexibility.

Manitoba has adopted a different approach, focusing on immigration streams that capture both economic and family class immigration (see Figure 14). As part of a goal to boost its immigration numbers, Manitoba announced significant revisions in May 2004. The intent behind these immigration streams is to efficiently process the applications of skilled workers. The Skilled Worker category has been redesigned to ensure to identify those applicants who will most likely be settle and adapt with relative ease.

Assessment Criteria

Each nominee is evaluated against criteria to determine whether the applicant is a good fit for the province. The assessment criteria of the provinces emphasize two factors: retention and skills. Appropriate assessment criteria are a necessary measure to ensure a good skills match between the nominee and the province, and whether they are ready for employment. These criteria also allow the provinces to determine whether the nominee is likely to adapt and be willing to stay in the province.

Figure 13: Occupation Categories

	British Columbia	Saskatchewan
Skilled Worker criteria	High priority industries include Aerospace, Post Secondary Education, Information and Technology. Other industries such as skilled trades, small to medium sized employers, and employers facing gnographic impacts are also considered. Generally speaking, employers in any area who can identify critical skills shortages and the need to fill these positions with non-Canadian workers will have their application considered if there is a significant economic benefit to the province.	The Skill Shortage Occupations was developed in conjunction with Saskatchewan employers who have experienced prolonged skills shortages. The skills shortage criterion applies when a job cannot be filled through the local labour market or further education and training of existing employees. If the occupation is not on the list, employers were encouraged to apply for a skill shortage designation. The list was established January 27, 2003. However, the criteria of this category will evolve given the recent changes, which eliminated the skills shortages list. Individuals who will potentially provide a significant economic benefit to Saskatchewan may be eligible under the critical impact category. These benefits include: job creation, technology transfer, or providing training for other employees. An individual who has worked in the province for a minimum of six months under a temporary work authorization is eligible for nomination under the existing work permit category with support by the HRSD.
Health Professionals	Registered nurses are recruited through Health Match BC, a recruitment service for health professionals.	Added as a category in 2003. Physicians and nurses whose education and professional certification can fill sustained occupational shortages that cannot be filled through domestic training or education.
Business PNs	Business PNs are separated into the following categories: **Business skills** – individuals experienced in business, possessing a breadth of resources, a minimum net worth of $2 million, and a willingness to make a minimum investment of $1 million. Applicants must also have a business plan, take an active role in management, and be able to create a minimum of five new jobs. **Regional Business** – a required minimum net worth of $600,000, and a minimum investment $300,000. The business must create a minimum of two new jobs, and must also be located outside of the Greater Vancouver Regional District. **Projects** – assists companies in the "timely entry of skilled, key managers and key technical professionals essential to the success of a business expected to generate significant economic benefits to BC" (BC PNP Website). Companies are expected to have a successful background in their proposed business, and are contingent on new investment and business expansions.	Business owners must have management experience, the investment funds to start their own business, at least one fact-finding visit to Saskatchewan, information on all assets and debts, a letter of recommendation from the nominee's banking institution, and a business plan. Business owners must live in Saskatchewan and actively manage and operate the business. The proposed business should be in one of the province's key sectors: • Agriculture and agri-value • Biotechnology • Culture • Energy • Environmental Industries • Forestry • Information technology & telecommunications. • Mining • Tourism • Value-added processing and manufacturing.
International Students	Students who receive an offer for permanent, full time employment may be nominated for the program if they specialize in the area of pure and applied science programs (at masters or doctorate level), computer sciences (undergraduate or higher), software, computer, electronic, electrical, and mechanical engineering, or business or commerce graduates (at the masters or doctorate levels).	International students who obtain a post-graduate foreign student work permit, a post-graduate foreign student work permit, work for a Saskatchewan employer for six months, and who have an offer of permanent employment can apply.

Figure 13 (continued): Occupation Categories

	British Columbia	Saskatchewan
Other	Restricted occupations: Clergy, medium and lower level management, administrative positions, retail, salespersons, hospitality industry jobs, semi-skilled manufacturing and fabrication, helpers in unskilled labour.	Farm owners: Individuals with the capital and experience to operate a farm, and who have made an offer to purchase land for this purpose. Four eligibility criteria: • Available equity verifying a net worth of $500,000. • Individuals must provide a signed offer to purchase, and a deposit to secure, the land. • Within a two-year period of making a signed offer (or shortly after) applicants must visit Saskatchewan. • Applicants must provide proof that they have the education and experience to operate a farm.

Figure 14: Manitoba's Assessment Streams

STREAM	Criteria
Employer Direct	• pre-approved guaranteed job offer from an employer who has a prior agreement with Manitoba to issue job offers, or • applicant is currently working full-time in Manitoba with a permanent job offer.
International Student	• graduated from a post-secondary education program in Manitoba • job offer related to their degree • a post-graduation work permit allowing them to work in Manitoba.
Family Support	• sufficient training, work experience, and language ability • close family members in Manitoba who have completed and signed an Manitoba PNP Affidavit of Support Form.
Community Support	• sufficient training, work experience, and language ability • Letter of Support from an organization that has a Community Support Agreement with the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program.
Strategic Recruitment Initiative	• sufficient training, work experience, and language ability • meet the requirements of current recruitment initiatives • received an Invitation to Apply letter from the Manitoba PNP.
General	• sufficient training, work experience, language ability • evidence of close relatives in Manitoba, or family-like support from friends or distant relatives in Manitoba • previous education or previous work experience in Manitoba • must score sufficient points for consideration and demonstrate their ability to establish successfully in Manitoba.

Source: Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program Web page, May 10, 2004

Attracting, and keeping immigrants is a major concern for all provinces because of the investment required to bring in new immigrants and the cost of settlement services. For this reason, adaptability is a criterion cited by all the provinces. Education, language, and work experience were other important factors where provinces were in uniform agreement. These factors attest to the skills of the candidates, ensuring that they will provide value to the provincial labour market. Guaranteed employment is a requirement in the employer-driven programs. In Manitoba where a job offer is not required, guaranteed employment gives the applicant a significant advantage.

BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan's criteria include industry recognition of credentials. For example, Saskatchewan requires written support from a credentialing agency in occupations where a license or other credentials are needed to work. Since these programs are strictly employer-driven, credential recognition is imperative to avoid delays for employers hoping to recruit immigrants to fill immediate shortages.

The Manitoba and Alberta PNP assessments also include a component called "Regional Development". According to Manitoba's criteria, applicants may receive additional points on their application if they can demonstrate that they have a connection to an area outside the perimeter of Winnipeg. This connection may include:

- Relatives or friends in the area.
- Unique ties to the community.

Figure 15: Provincial Assessment Criteria

FACTOR	BC	Alberta	SK	Manitoba
Age	NO	NO	YES	YES
Education	YES	YES	YES	YES
Adaptability	YES	YES	YES	YES
Knowledge of English or French	YES	YES	YES	YES
Work Experience	YES	YES*	YES	YES
Occupation/Good Skills Match for Position	YES	YES	YES	NO
Occupational Demand/Provincial Labour Market Conditions	YES	YES	NO	YES
Employer	YES	YES	NO	YES
Industry Recognized Credentials/ Industry standards	YES	YES	YES	NO
Guaranteed Employment	N/A	N/A	YES	YES
Potential for Long-term Employment	YES	YES	NO	NO
Current Immigration status	YES	YES	NO	NO
Spousal Employment	NO	NO	YES	NO
Salary	YES	YES	NO	NO
Regional Development	YES	YES	NO	YES
Potential Economic Benefits	YES	YES	NO	NO
Financial Self-Sufficiency	YES	NO	NO	YES

*except for international students

- Experience in living/working in rural areas.
- A list of potential employers in the area that would be hiring in occupations specific to the skills of the applicant.
- Evidence of contact between employer and potential employee.

Including regional development in the assessment presents immigrants with the incentive to locate in smaller communities. It leads to greater regional dispersion in the province, populating rural areas that are in need of skilled workers.

The Points System

Similar to the federal government's skilled worker class, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan also have a points system to assess potential nominees. The points system ensures that the PN selection decision follows a uniform standard. Due to recent changes to the program, Saskatchewan's point system is currently being revamped. Alberta uses internal points systems loosely based on those used by the federal government (see Figure 16).

Under Manitoba's assessment streams, the General Stream employs a points system to evaluate prospective nominees. While the other assessment streams are strongly defined, the General stream is a flexible category (similar to the federal points system) that determines whether the applicant will be a good candidate for immigration by establishing the individual's connection to Manitoba (see Figure 17).

Figure 16: Federal Points System

CRITERION	Available Points
Education	25
Experience	21
Language	24
Age	10
Arranged Employment	10
Personal Suitability/ Adaptability	10
TOTAL AVAILABLE	100
Minimum Requirement	67

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004b

Figure 17: Manitoba General Stream Self-Assessment Worksheet

CRITERION	Maximum Points
Age	10
Education	20
Work Experience	16
Language	18
Adaptability	
Close relative in Manitoba	12
Family-Like Support of Distant Relative or Friend in MB	5
Work Experience in MB: 6 months or more	10
Completed Post-Secondary Ed. in MB: 2 years or more	10
Completed Post-Secondary Ed. MB: 8 to 18 months	5
Completed High School in MB	5
Regional Development	5
General Assessment	5
TOTAL POINTS	121
Minimum Requirement	55

Source: Manitoba Provincial Nominee Website

The most notable feature of these two points systems is that Manitoba has a lower passing requirement. Also, Manitoba places a significant emphasis on adaptability. Age, education, and language receive a higher weight in the federal criteria. These differences can be explained by the flexibility imbedded in Manitoba's policy, a feature meant to help reach its aggressive immigration targets. Ensuring adaptability is a key factor in determining retention. Family and friends, work experience or

education in Manitoba – these are potential attachments that will increase the likelihood of staying in Manitoba.

IV. Central Elements

Analyzing the factors that have influenced the growth of these programs will give an idea of program features that lead to success.

Promoting the PNP

Marketing the PNPs raises their profile as a viable choice for both employers and prospective nominees. Promoting the PNP overseas is pivotal to the success of the programs (Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration 2003). Marketing informs employers about an immigration process tailored to bring in much needed labour, and to promote the benefits of using the PNP. A communications strategy targeted to employers can clear up misperceptions about the PNP as a complex and unwieldy process (Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration 2003).

Although three of the four western PNPs are employer-driven, there also needs to be awareness among potential nominees. An evaluation of the BC PNP found that 43% of prospective nominees were found through employer recruitment, while 34% of prospective nominees were employed by their own initiative (Rivers & Associates 2003). Marketing methods are pivotal in informing prospective nominees of this option.

Figure 18: Marketing Methods

PROVINCE	Local	International
BC	• Immigration lawyers and consultants • Industry associations and major employees • Post-secondary institutions • Human resources institutions	• The government works with Health Match BC to recruit nurses from abroad • International recruitment for nurses has been conducted in Australia, UK, and New Zealand • A general overseas mission in 2003 was conducted in Korea, and other missions to Taiwan, China, and Singapore were conducted in early 2004 • A print ad was recently published in the Canada News, a UK immigration publication
Alberta	Presentations made to: • industry associations • Chambers of Commerce • regional alliances • human resources practitioners • immigration lawyers and consultants	• Immigration promotion and recruitment activities in the UK (Emigrate 2004) and Germany in partnership with regional alliances. • Use of albertafirst.com as a tool to profile communities throughout Alberta as a source of employment for future settlement in Alberta. • Article placement and advertising in Canada News (UK immigration publication)
Saskatchewan	Marketing to employers: • Presentations are made to sectors • Mail-outs, brochures, representation at trade shows, newspaper and magazine advertisements, conferences and workshops, direct business contact • Newsletters sent to associations • Informal partnerships with cultural associations and provincial economic development agencies	• Represented in "Emigrate 2004", an immigration show in UK sponsored by Outbound Publishing, and emigration fairs in Korea, Netherlands, and Belgium last year. • International brochures, newspaper and magazine editorial, consultants, international seminars, trade shows, visa officials, and hosting potential PNs • Work with realtors to promote PNP to potential farm owners. • Building working relationships with key visa offices (e.g. Buffalo, London, Kyiv, and Seoul).
Manitoba	Partnerships: • Municipalities: Winkler, Steinbach • Organizations: Jewish Federation of Winnipeg • Industry and labour leaders (MB Business Council, MB Chambers of Commerce) • Regional contacts (regional/municipal offices, employers) • Francophone community representatives • Provincial education representatives, Manitoba university and college campuses: marketing to international students in Manitoba • Other stakeholders: Manitoba government departments, federal government • Local service providers (settlement and ESL services)	• Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses (MARN): recruiting nurses in the Philippines • Two or three promotional trips a year (London, Paris, Argentina) • Nine million plus hits to website in 2003 • Development and worldwide dissemination of various promotional products (i.e. brochures, booklets, handouts, etc.) • Participation in various emigration fairs, seminars, meetings with prospective immigrants • Recent missions to Korea, China, Macedonia, Argentina, England, France • Targeted international ad campaigns (i.e. Canada News, newspapers, etc) • International missions include travel with the Winnipeg Jewish Community and Manitoba Business Council • Building relationships and immigration expertise on case files through daily exchanges and regular meetings with Program Managers in Canadian visa offices

Different communication methods are used to contact groups with a vested interest in the PNP: employers, industry associations, overseas consulates, and prospective immigrants. In particular, two interesting aspects of marketing methods involve engaging the community, and conducting direct recruitment internationally.

1. Community Partnerships

Government partnerships with community organizations facilitate the immigration process by marketing the PNP and attracting immigrants. One of the recommendations set out by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration noted, "local municipal government, community groups and business associations should be actively encouraged to participate in the provincial nominee program" (Standing Committee 2003 8). Manitoba has established links with communities to promote the PNP. Winkler and Steinbach are two communities that have reached community initiative agreements with the Manitoba government. The Manitoba government also has partnered with the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg. This partnership has resulted in GrowWinnipeg, created in 1996 to rejuvenate the city's shrinking Jewish population. This project helps immigrants apply for visas and assists in settlement issues such as housing, employment, and education (Sax 2004). In addition, Manitoba's renegotiations in 2002 stressed a stronger commitment to grow the official languages. This has resulted community initiates with the Francophone community. The Community Support assessment stream is meant to capture those who chose to immigrate through the community organization channel (see Figure 14). Saskatchewan has also established informal partnerships. With limited government resources, using community partnerships is a particularly useful marketing method.

2. International Recruitment

Recruiting nurses has also taken place in the Philippines to fill provincial nursing shortages. Candidates in Manila were given the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses (MARN) nursing exam. To assist nurses in the Philippines in their settlement, a provincial committee provides temporary housing, contacts host families, and assists with social insurance numbers, health insurance and registration with MARN. BC has addressed the pressing need for nurses by partnering with Health Match BC, a recruiting company for health professionals.

The PNs themselves play an important factor in awareness. Positive feedback by PNs to their home country encourages others to engage in the process. It must also be noted that, while marketing is an effective measure to raise interest in the PNP, it must be backed by resources to address this interest. Manitoba, who has been highly effective in raising this level of interest, has a department supported by a significant number of employees to deal specifically with the PNP.

Using Canadian Consulates

The Internet is an important tool to communicate the PNPs. A consulate's website provides the most convenient forum to find out more information about immigration. Finding the right information with relative ease is a key feature of websites, and in particular, providing direct information is the best way to promote the program. Unless an individual is looking for the PNP, it is unlikely that they will be aware unless presented the information directly.

Looking at each country's Canadian consulate website can give an idea of how well the provincial nominee immigrant class is promoted overseas. Although the website is not the only a medium for communicating this immigration class, it provides a good signal of the level of awareness (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Consulate Website Information on the PNPs

LEVEL OF INFORMATION	Number of Consulates
PNP information directly on the website	12
Direct link to CIC information on PNP	48
No information	18

Information gathered March 15, 2004

Very few countries had direct information on this particular immigrant class. Of seventy-seven consulate websites (some countries have more than one website), only six had direct information on immigrating as a PN. These countries were: Australia, Colombia, Jamaica, Taiwan, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. Six other consulate websites were linked to the websites with direct information, and are included in the number of websites containing direction information. United Arab Emirates and Kuwait provide a direct link to the UK website. Ecuador provided a link to the Colombia website, while both Zambia and Zimbabwe provided a link to the South Africa website. It is interesting to note that the countries with websites containing direct information (UK, Australia, South Africa) featured predominantly in the source countries for PNs for BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, suggesting that the higher profile in these countries has resulted in greater numbers of PNs.

Retention Instruments

A significant concern of the provinces investing in a PNP is ensuring that the PNs stay in the province in which they were nominated. The investment in bringing in and settling new immigrants is justified by the economic and social benefits generated through immigration. In the case of the PNPs, which require significant provincial resources, there is no return on this provincial investment if the PN chooses to leave. Data from the CIC demonstrate that the western provinces have experienced varying success in retaining immigrants (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Number of immigrants living in province in 1996 as a percentage of the number giving the province as a destination between 1981-1995

PROVINCE	% of Immigrants in Province
BC	101%
Alberta	74%
Saskatchewan	50%
Manitoba	68%

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001

The numbers show that BC has been highly successful at keeping and attracting immigrants. Alberta has also retained a significant portion of its immigrants. However, Saskatchewan and Manitoba's numbers show that immigrant retention is quite low. It may be too early to put stock in current retention rates for these programs; however, it is clear that both Manitoba and Saskatchewan can stand to benefit significantly if the PNPs are an effective tool to increase retention rates.

1. Temporary Work Permit

In terms of employment, a significant factor contributing to retention is the temporary work permit. In Saskatchewan, the PNP's skilled worker category makes allowances for individuals who have worked in the province for a minimum of six months under a temporary work authorization. Approximately 95% of Alberta PNs were temporary foreign workers (TFW) before they were nominated. A significant number of those changing from TFW to PN status are doctors. In BC, 74% of PNs were TFWs. The work permit is an effective tool for retention because it allows employers to determine whether the employee is a good fit for the position, opening the door for the PN process. It also allows employees an opportunity to evaluate the employer, and whether the position is in accordance with their expectations. The employee's family is also given the opportunity to adjust to the community, helping them determine whether they would like to settle in the province.

2. PN Assessment

Proper assessment can lead to greater retention by ensuring that the applicant possesses characteristics that would lend to greater adaptability to the province. In the assessment criteria (see Figure 15), all of the western provinces indicate the prospective nominee's adaptability as a factor in reviewing the application. Ensuring that prospective nominees have a connection to Manitoba through a job offer, family, temporary work, or studying as an international student, are all factors that increase the likelihood of retention in Manitoba. Spousal employment, included in Manitoba and Saskatchewan's criteria, is also an important factor that could ensure retention.

3. Family Reunification

While family reunification remains firmly under the control of the federal government, there has been an introduction through the Manitoba policy. The purpose of Manitoba's strategy is to increase the rate of retention by "facilitat[ing] the settling and retaining of the larger family unit in Manitoba" (Manitoba provincial nominee program website). Adult dependents (older children) are allowed to come with provincial nominees, in addition to spouses and child dependents. In all other provinces, adult dependents must file separate claims. This immigration has been formalized through the Family Support Stream (see Figure 14). A ripple effect from this policy results: as PN immigration increases, it is followed by an increase in family class immigration. All other programs allow immediate family to come with the PN, but require children over 18 to submit separate applications. Considering that the majority of immigrants who chose the major urban centers cited "family or friends" over "job prospects" as the overwhelming reason for choosing that location (see Figure 11), the importance of a social network in a community should be stressed when formulating policy (Statistics Canada 2003).

4. Community Partnerships

Historically, the use of private initiatives has been successful in establishing immigrant communities outside of traditional immigrant-receiving cities. For example, the joint public/private initiative sponsoring Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s was successful in creating ethnic communities outside of the large urban centers. A matching program in which the federal government sponsored a refugee for every refugee sponsored by a private sponsor (e.g., churches, individuals), the initiative allowed sufficient numbers of immigrants to concentrate in certain areas (DeVoretz 2003). This concentration

• Australian Immigration Policy •

The Australian government has recognized that regional strategies establish competitive advantages. This has been a particular concern because of population decline in specific regions due to working age population migration to large cities. Among the 722 local governments, 250 are experiencing decline (Withers and Powall 2003). Of the immigrants who arrive, 80% settled in cities with populations greater than 100,000. Increasing regional inequality is a concern for policymakers. Withers and Powall note that, "the absence of local empowerment will be fatal to successful regional advance in the modern knowledge economy" (19). Sustaining economic growth requires government policies that can increase a region's productivity, or lower costs to overcome any location disadvantages (Withers and Powall 2003). Regional immigration policies have been proposed as a solution to draw more people to less-populated (designated) areas of Australia.

Similar to the PNP, Australia's regional immigration policy has categories for skilled workers and business immigration. Applicants must pass a points test where they are assessed according to their age, qualifications, English knowledge, occupation on skilled occupations list, and recent work experience. These are the details of the different programs (Withers and Powall 2003):

- **Regional sponsored migration scheme** – Employers in low population growth areas can fill skill shortages that cannot be filled through the local labour market.
- **State/territory nominated independent scheme** – State and territories may nominate skilled workers who will settle in areas where their skills are in demand.
- **Skilled-designated area sponsored** – similar to family reunification, families living in designated regional areas can sponsor close relatives who have the desired skills. This policy is similar to the regional sponsored migration scheme, and does not require the migrant to settle in the designated areas where relative is located.
- **Skilled-Australia sponsored** – Comparable to the skilled-designated area sponsored program, this policy is intended for potential skilled migrants whose sponsor lives outside designated areas of Australia. Additional points are granted for those applicants whose sponsors live in designated area.
- **State sponsored business skills** – States and territories may sponsor business skills applicants intending to migrate as business owners. This policy also allows senior executives to be sponsored.
- **Regional established business in Australia** – For those staying in Australia temporarily for business (Long Stay) visas, this policy allows individuals to apply onshore for permanent residence if they have created a lucrative business venture in a designated area of Australia.

In this four-year period, the total number of people immigrating under these categories was 15,669, compared to 80,000 immigrants who arrived per year during that time. The program has not been successful in rural and smaller centers, as the majority of immigrants have settled in the capital city of the designated areas. Since these programs are relatively new, changes such as better promotion, an increased focus on regions, and streamlining the categories may be able to balance the geographic inequality.

of immigrants created a community that could accommodate for the needs of the new settlers and ease the transition into Canadian society. An example of this is Abbotsford, BC, which received a significant number of church-sponsored refugees who remained in the city, despite the fact that Vancouver was only 70 kilometers away (DeVoretz 2003). Presently, community organizations have a great potential to work with the government to attract immigrants. As mentioned, community partnerships in Manitoba have been instrumental in attracting and retaining immigrants. By working with communities willing to participate in the program, these partnerships can allow provinces to expand the program in the face of limited government resources.

5. International Students

Education at a Canadian university results in improved English skills and also a degree that will be recognized by employers. Students from abroad educated in Canada have a high likelihood of staying in the province where they went to school, if they are offered employment. Research has shown that international students have a strong interest in staying in the same Prairie city in which they were educated, so long as there are employment opportunities available (Cormode 2002). The Saskatchewan government's report on immigration noted that including international students under the Saskatchewan PNP would allow "a more seamless transition to permanent residency and provide the province with an expanded pool of highly skilled individuals" (Lorje 2003, 15). The recent changes in Saskatchewan's program hopes to capture the 1,700 foreign students studying in the province (Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs 2004b). Alberta has also signed agreements to facilitate the entry of international students, fast tracking study permits to be processed in twenty-eight days rather than three months. Steps are also being taken to retain these students by issuing two-year work permits for those who have graduated from an Alberta post-secondary institution. Again, Manitoba's assessment streams have defined a category specifically to process the applications of international students.

Conclusion

Greater dispersion among lesser-populated regions is a significant benefit of the PNPs. Giving immigrants incentives to locate in small to medium sized cities and rural areas – and stay – are important for both immigrants and these areas. Geared towards attracting immigrants according to specific labour market needs, the PNPs are the vehicle to achieve this goal. Certain features of the programs have clearly lent to a greater profile and resulted in greater numbers of immigrants. These central elements have become known based on the success of certain programs, or uniform agreement in the provincial policies:

- Provincial involvement in a regional immigration policy is a viable way of ensuring that provincial needs are met. People respond to incentives – imbedding the appropriate incentives into policy can achieve the goal of greater regional dispersion.

- Marketing is a key component of these programs; letting employers, immigrants, and community organizations know about the PNP is important to the growth of the programs.

- Since PNPs require a considerable commitment in resources, partnerships with community organizations to promote the PNP overseas could go a long way in raising awareness, and welcoming and settling new immigrants. This is especially important considering resource constraints at the federal and provincial level.

- Although the programs are relatively new, long-term concerns about retention are a factor in assessing the prospective nominees. Ensuring adaptability for immigrants and employers is an important feature in each of the program's structures.

- The source countries of PNs counter the predominant immigration trends. The composition is influenced by the employer-driven aspect and participation by community organizations.

Over time, as the PNPs develop, it would be highly useful for each province to provide consistent and uniform evaluations of the programs. Through these evaluations, the benefits of the programs can be clearly understood and weaknesses can be identified. Even more pivotal, the strengths of the programs can be recognized, so as to make better use of resources. ■

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